

BEFORE THE  
OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS  
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

In the Matter of:

GUARDIAN ON BEHALF OF STUDENT,

v.

LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL  
DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT  
OF EDUCATION, CALIFORNIA  
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
AGENCY, CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT  
OF MENTAL HEALTH, AND LOS  
ANGELES COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF  
MENTAL HEALTH.

OAH CASE NO. 2010110500

ORDER OF DETERMINATION OF  
SUFFICIENCY OF DUE PROCESS  
COMPLAINT

On November 12, 2010, Student filed a Due Process Hearing Request<sup>1</sup> (complaint) against the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), California Department of Education (CDE), California Health and Human Services Agency (CHHS), California Department of Mental Health (CDMH), and Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (LACDMH). On November 23, 2010, CDMH filed a Notice of Insufficiency (NOI) as to Student's complaint.

APPLICABLE LAW

The named parties to a due process hearing request have the right to challenge the sufficiency of the complaint.<sup>2</sup> The party filing the complaint is not entitled to a hearing unless the complaint meets the requirements of title 20 United States Code section 1415(b)(7)(A).

A complaint is sufficient if it contains: (1) a description of the nature of the problem of the child relating to the proposed initiation or change concerning the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of the child, or the provision of a free appropriate

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<sup>1</sup> A request for a due process hearing under Education Code section 56502 is the due process complaint notice required under title 20 United States Code section 1415(b)(7)(A).

<sup>2</sup> 20 U.S.C. § 1415(b) & (c).

public education (FAPE) to the child; (2) facts relating to the problem; and (3) a proposed resolution of the problem to the extent known and available to the party at the time.<sup>3</sup> These requirements prevent vague and confusing complaints, and promote fairness by providing the named parties with sufficient information to know how to prepare for the hearing and how to participate in resolution sessions and mediation.<sup>4</sup>

The complaint provides enough information when it provides “an awareness and understanding of the issues forming the basis of the complaint.”<sup>5</sup> The pleading requirements should be liberally construed in light of the broad remedial purposes of the IDEA and the relative informality of the due process hearings it authorizes.<sup>6</sup> Whether the complaint is sufficient is a matter within the sound discretion of the Administrative Law Judge.<sup>7</sup>

## DISCUSSION

Student’s complaint raises two issues for determination which concerns the opposing parties’ respective duties to discuss the findings of LACDMH’s mental health assessment at an IEP meeting and Student’s possible need for additional mental health services. LACDMH refused to attend the October 14, 2010 individualized education program (IEP) meeting claiming that this was due to the Governor’s October 8, 2010 veto of state funding to county mental health agencies to provide mental health services for special education students pursuant to Government Code sections 7570, et seq., including mental health assessments.

CDMH asserts that Student’s claims do not contain any allegations that CDMH denied Student a FAPE. The complaint concerns allegations that LACDMH failed to timely assess Student, and failed to attend the IEP meeting. These allegations do involve CDMH because LACDMH purportedly refused to attend the IEP meeting, and the complaint

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<sup>3</sup> 20 U.S.C. § 1415(b)(7)(A)(ii)(III) & (IV).

<sup>4</sup> See, H.R.Rep. No. 108-77, 1st Sess. (2003), p. 115; Sen. Rep. No. 108-185, 1st Sess. (2003), pp. 34-35.

<sup>5</sup> Sen. Rep. No. 108-185, *supra*, at p. 34.

<sup>6</sup> *Alexandra R. v. Brookline School Dist.* (D.N.H., Sept. 10, 2009, No. 06-cv-0215-JL) 2009 WL 2957991 at p.3 [nonpub. opn.]; *Escambia County Board of Educ. v. Benton* (S.D.Ala. 2005) 406 F. Supp.2d 1248, 1259-1260; *Sammons v. Polk County School Bd.* (M.D. Fla., Oct. 28, 2005, No. 8:04CV2657T24EAJ) 2005 WL 2850076 at p. 3 [nonpub. opn.] ; but cf. *M.S.-G. v. Lenape Regional High School Dist.* (3d Cir. 2009) 306 Fed.Appx. 772, at p. 3 [nonpub. opn.].

<sup>7</sup> Assistance to States for the Education of Children with Disabilities and Preschool Grants for Children with Disabilities, 71 Fed.Reg. 46540-46541, 46699 (Aug. 14, 2006).

contains sufficient allegations that CDMH might be the responsible agency to ensure that Student receive adequate mental health services to meet his unique needs if LACDMH continues to refuse to be involved. (Govt. Code, §§ 7571 and 7576, subd. (a), and Cal. Code Regs., tit. 2, §§ 60600, subd. (a).)

If CDMH is not be a responsible party, or finding that CDMH is not a responsible party is outside the scope of OAH's jurisdiction, CDMH's contentions are not appropriate for a NOI, which just looks at the face of the complaint to determine its sufficiency. CDMH's contentions will be addressed in its Motion to Dismiss, filed November 23, 2010. Accordingly, Student's complaint is legally sufficient.

### ORDER

1. The complaint is sufficient under title 20 United States Code section 1415(b)(7)(A)(ii).
2. All mediation, prehearing conference, and hearing dates in this matter are confirmed.

Dated: November 29, 2010

/s/  
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PETER PAUL CASTILLO  
Administrative Law Judge  
Office of Administrative Hearings